



April 19, 2004

South Central Asthma Coalition Sponsors World Asthma Day Activities

Asthma has reached epidemic proportions in the United States, affecting 20 million Americans, including 9 million children. Since 1980, the biggest growth in asthma cases has been in children under five. In Idaho, an estimated 113,045 live with the adverse effects of asthma.

Asthma is a chronic, potentially life threatening, disease and is often identified as the most common chronic disease of children and the number one cause of school absenteeism. Asthma-related breathing problems are called attacks. During an attack, three changes occur in the lungs: cells in air tubes make more mucus than normal and clog the tubes, the air tubes swell, and the muscles in the tubes tighten. These changes cause the tubes to narrow and make it hard for a person with asthma to breathe. Triggers, such as cigarette smoke, allergies, or participating in strenuous exercise, usually cause asthma attacks. In an effort to increase public awareness about asthma and promote better diagnosis and treatment, May is designated Asthma Awareness Month and May 4th is World Asthma Day.

Locally, the South Central Asthma Coalition will be sponsoring an asthma education and awareness event. The Coalition will host an Asthma Health Fair Saturday, May 1, at the Magic Valley Mall in the vacant KB Toy store space from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The fair includes free spirometry testing, a simple and effective way to determine how much air a person can exhale, how fast a person can exhale, and how much air a person can inhale. There will also be information on environmental asthma triggers (like dust and cigarette smoke), and information about how to effectively manage triggers.

For more information, contact Elvia Caldera, South Central District Health Asthma Program Coordinator, at 734-5900, ext. 288.

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Side Bar #1:

Common asthma triggers:

- Animals with fur
- Cigarette smoke
- Dust in beds and pillows
- Dust from sweeping
- Strong smells and sprays
- Pollens from trees and flowers
- Colds and flu
- Strenuous sporting activities like running or playing tennis

Side Bar #2:

Below are a few questions that may help you and your healthcare professional assess whether or not you have asthma:

- ☐ Sometimes I cough or have trouble breathing while completing daily activities.
- ☐ Sometimes I avoid exercising because I have problems breathing, or I start coughing.
- ☐ Sometimes I wake up at night because of coughing or shortness of breath.
- ☐ Sometimes, especially when it is very cold or very hot outside, I avoid going out because I may have trouble breathing.
- ☐ I have missed work or school because of breathing problems.
- ☐ Sometimes I feel short of breath.
- ☐ Sometimes my chest feels tight.
- ☐ Sometimes I hear myself wheezing (difficulty breathing accompanied by whistling sound, especially when it's cold outside).
- ☐ Sometimes I have coughing spells.
- ☐ Dust, pollen, or pets make me cough, wheeze, or have trouble breathing.
- ☐ My breathing may be worse in very cold weather.
- ☐ Sometimes I have trouble breathing when it's very hot outside.
- ☐ My breathing gets worse when I'm around tobacco smoke, fumes, or strong odors.
- ☐ When I catch a cold, it often goes to my chest and I have trouble breathing.

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